

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A question answering system in which a first knowledge database including a knowledge source of a first language, and a second knowledge database including a knowledge source of a second language are used to obtain an answer to a question inputted in the first language by a user, the system comprising:
 - a first acquisition unit configured to retrieve, from the first knowledge database, a first prospective answer of the first language to the question;
 - a first translation unit configured to translate the question into the second language;
 - a second acquisition unit configured to retrieve, from the second knowledge database, a second prospective answer of the second language to the question translated into the second language;
 - a second translation unit configured to translate the second prospective answer of the second language into the first language;
 - a processing unit configured to rank the first prospective answer in conjunction with a translation result of the second prospective answer; and
 - an output unit configured to output any one answer according to a result of ranking performed by the processing unit.
2. The system according to claim 1, wherein the processing unit ranks the first prospective answer in

conjunction with the translation result of the second prospective answer according to whether the number of retrieval hits in the first knowledge database and the second knowledge database.

5 3. The system according to claim 1, further comprising:

an answer quality determination unit configured to determine simplicity or coverage of each of the first prospective answer and the second prospective answer
10 based on lexical processing,

wherein the processing unit ranks the first prospective answer in conjunction with the translation result of the second prospective answer according to the simplicity or coverage determined by the answer
15 quality determination unit.

4. The system according to claim 1, further comprising:

an answer freshness determination unit configured to determine a degree of freshness of each of the first
20 prospective answer and the second prospective answer,

wherein the processing unit ranks the first prospective answer in conjunction with the translation result of the second prospective answer according to the degree of freshness determined by the answer
25 freshness determination unit.

5. A question answering method for obtaining an answer to a question inputted in a first language by

a user by use of a first knowledge database including a knowledge source of the first language, and a second knowledge database including a knowledge source of a second language, the method comprising:

5 retrieving, from the first knowledge database, a first prospective answer of the first language to the question;

 translating the question into the second language;

 retrieving, from the second knowledge database,
10 a second prospective answer of the second language to the question translated into the second language;

 translating the second prospective answer of the second language into the first language;

 ranking the first prospective answer in
15 conjunction with a translation result of the second prospective answer; and

 outputting any one answer according to a result of the ranking.

6. The method according to claim 5, wherein
20 the first prospective answer in conjunction with the translation result of the second prospective answer are ranked according to whether the number of retrieval hits in the first knowledge database and the second knowledge database.

25 7. The method according to claim 5, further comprising:

 determining simplicity or coverage of each of

the first prospective answer and the second prospective answer based on lexical processing,

wherein the first prospective answer in conjunction with the translation result of the second prospective answer are ranked according to the
5 simplicity or coverage.

8. The method according to claim 5, further comprising:

determining a degree of freshness of each of the
10 first prospective answer and the second prospective answer,

wherein the first prospective answer in conjunction with the translation result of the second prospective answer are ranked according to the degree
15 of freshness.

9. A program product comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program code means for causing a computer to obtain an answer to a question inputted in a first language by a user by use of a
20 first knowledge database including a knowledge source of the first language, and a second knowledge database including a knowledge source of a second language, the computer readable program code means in the computer program product comprising:

25 program code means for causing a computer to retrieve, from the first knowledge database, a first prospective answer of the first language to the

question;

program code means for causing a computer to
translate the question into the second language;

5 program code means for causing a computer to
retrieve, from the second knowledge database, a second
prospective answer of the second language to the
question translated into the second language;

10 program code means for causing a computer to
translate the second prospective answer of the second
language into the first language;

program code means for causing a computer to
rank the first prospective answer in conjunction with
a translation result of the second prospective answer;
and

15 program code means for causing a computer to
output any one answer according to a result of the
ranking.

20 10. The product according to claim 9, wherein
the first prospective answer in conjunction with the
translation result of the second prospective answer are
ranked according to whether the number of retrieval
hits in the first knowledge database and the second
knowledge database.

25 11. The product according to claim 9, further
comprising:

program code means for causing a computer to
determine simplicity or coverage of each of the first

prospective answer and the second prospective answer
based on lexical processing,

wherein the first prospective answer in
conjunction with the translation result of the second
5 prospective answer are ranked according to the
simplicity or coverage.

12. The product according to claim 9, further
comprising:

program code means for causing a computer to
10 determine a degree of freshness of each of the first
prospective answer and the second prospective answer,

wherein the first prospective answer in
conjunction with the translation result of the second
prospective answer are ranked according to the degree
15 of freshness.